

BABYLONIAN WISDOM LITERATURE

BY

W. G. LAMBERT

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PREFACE

THE science of Assyriology has been flourishing now for more than a century, and the pace of discovery shows no sign of abating. Old finds have scarcely begun to yield their secrets before new finds turn up. Owing to the paucity of labourers in the field, materials for study are very scattered, and of no branch of Assyriology is this more true than of Wisdom literature. This is an outstanding genre of Akkadian literature, second only to the epics in literary merit and content value. Yet the scholar can only use it from the piecemeal publication in dozens of books and scores of articles, many long since out of print, and some very unusual even in specialist libraries. In this scattered form the material is often very unreliable. Important texts are known only from copies of Craig or Langdon. Translations such as may be sought by those not initiated in the mysteries of cuneiform are often in German or French, and some contain inaccuracies in large numbers which any good student of today could correct. The aim of the present volume is to provide reliable copies of tablets, both published and hitherto unpublished, and careful editions with notes for the scholar, and translations and introductions explaining the background and content for the non-technical reader.

The copies of tablets are an attempt at compromise between the 'freehand' and 'accurate' schools. I do not believe that the scientific value of a copy is enhanced by its being almost illegible. I have therefore normally put space between the lines of script. It has been my principle, however, not to standardize the sign-forms, and to observe lateral spacing exactly. Every effort has been made to see all the tablets, but in a few cases the original cannot now be found, so that an old copy has had to be reproduced. Also I have been unable to reach the museums of Ankara and Baghdad, and for the few tablets preserved there I have relied upon and reproduced the copies of others. In the transliterations I have generally avoided the practice of some scholars who write ideograms in capitals rather than transcribe them into Akkadian. The justification urged, that this method communicates just what is on the tablet rather than an interpretation which might in fact be wrong, has some validity. But it does a great deal of harm to present the reader of a work of literature with a text partly written in a scribal code. To the ancient reader the ideograms were visual signs which, because of his profound acquaintance with the language of the work, he automatically read as Akkadian. To the modern scholar ideograms are Sumerian words no less and no more vocal than the parts of the text written in Akkadian, and it may be doubted if many modern scholars are so at home in Akkadian that the sight of, for example, GIŠ.ŠINIG brings *binu* to mind without the cumbrous process of equating a written and oral Sumerian word with its Akkadian equivalent. An ideogram written out in capitals ceases to be a sign representing a word. Those who regard Akkadian literature as a *corpus vile* for scholarly dissection will naturally find no objection, but those who care for literature as literature will hesitate to interpose a barrier of Sumerian between the

reader and his understanding of the text. The objection is raised that the rendering of ideograms can often be a matter of doubt. This may be true of omens or mathematical texts, but it hardly ever applies to literature. The uncertainties about the endings need cause no hesitation, as the scribes from whom most of our copies of Akkadian literature come were quite indifferent about endings when they wrote words syllabically.

In the transliterated texts in this volume ideograms of very frequent occurrence are transferred into Akkadian without more ado, e.g. LUGAL becomes *šarru*, DINGIR *ilu*, and so on. With less-frequent examples, and where equally commonly attested alternatives exist (e.g. SILA and E.SÍR = *sūqu*), the Sumerian word is added in brackets. If, however, there is something to be gained by giving the Sumerian alone, as in critical and philological notes, I have not hesitated to do so.

In the composition of the transliterated texts the best-preserved manuscript has normally been followed, and the variant readings of other copies have been put in the apparatus. On the few occasions where the best-preserved text is obviously in error, or is plainly objectionable, the reading of another manuscript has been inserted in the text. In general, however, no attempt has been made to select the best readings eclectically from all the evidence, as it is doubtful whether our knowledge is adequate to do this scientifically. For those interested in scholarly minutiae the readings in the apparatus are no less important than those in the text. The symbols for the manuscripts are arranged so as to provide a general indication of the nature of the tablets without recourse to the lists. Roman capitals (A, &c.) refer to tablets in Assyrian script from Ashurbanipal's library. (No Ashurbanipal tablets in Babylonian script occur in this book.) Bold-face lower-case letters (**a**, &c.) refer to tablets from Assur or Sultantepe. Lower-case roman (*a*, &c.) refers to Neo-Late-Babylonian tablets.

In the Akkadian text no thoroughgoing differentiation between *i* and *e* has been attempted. Scribes of late literary tablets are often careless in this matter (cf. Commentary on *Theodicy* 215: *re-e-šú* and 218: *ri-i-ši*), and it is pointless to introduce an artificial consistency in part by using rare syllabic values. To be absolutely consistent it would be necessary to employ the value $i_{15} = e$, and to invent a further value $e_x = i$.

Many Wisdom texts are written in metre. It consists of a certain schematic balance of words such as can be observed even in the English renderings of the Psalms. It is nothing like the rigorous metres of Greek and Roman poets, except that a trochee must end the line. Lines normally fall into either three or four words or groups of words, and in the latter case there is a caesura after the second word or group. In the transliterated Akkadian texts this structure has been indicated by arranging the words in columns. Grouping of lines is also a part of Akkadian metre. The couplet is exceedingly common. In this book it is also accepted that poets at times intended single lines or groups of three as units. Extra spacing in the text and translation has been used to indicate this arrangement.

The translations do not strive after extreme literality, which is unnecessary for the reader of the original, and misleading for the layman. Some particularly hypothetical renderings have been italicized.

The undertaking of this work was suggested to me in 1950 by Professor Sidney Smith, from whose experienced counsel I benefited during the early stages of my work. Mr. D. J. Wiseman, of the British Museum, gave me valuable help in my first attempts at copying tablets, and has helped with collations when I have been out of London. This book owes much to the encouragement and advice so freely given by Professor A. Sachs during his periods at the British Museum, and his final assistance has been with the reading of the proofs. Dr. O. R. Gurney, with whose collaboration the first two tablets of *Ludlul* were published in 1954, has been my counsellor on many points. In all matters pertaining to the Berlin tablet collections Dr. Franz Köcher has been my learned consultant. In Istanbul I came to appreciate the helpfulness of Frau Kizilyay. Dr. E. I. Gordon, of the University Museum, Philadelphia, has helped me from his unique knowledge of Sumerian proverbs. During the latter stages of my work I was fortunate to be invited, through the good offices of Professor A. L. Oppenheim, to spend a summer at the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. There I was able to make use of the vast collections of Assyriological materials. Most of the newly found Assyrian fragments in the British Museum were identified in Chicago among the copies of the late Dr. F. W. Geers. I was also able to draw on the vast learning of Professors T. Jacobsen and B. Landsberger, from whom I received many valuable suggestions.

The following authorities have generously consented to the copying and publication of tablets under their charge:

The Trustees of the British Museum,
Dr. G. R. Meyer, Director-General of the Staatliche Museen, Berlin,
The Minister of Education of the Turkish Republic,
Professor S. N. Kramer, Curator of the Tablet Collections, University Museum,
Philadelphia,
His Excellency Dr. Naji al-Asil, formerly Director-General of Antiquities in Iraq.

Professor Dr. E. Weidner supplied Pinches's copy of a now-lost fable fragment. The Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft has consented to the reprinting of three copies by E. Ebeling in *KAR* of pieces which are not to hand. Dr. O. R. Gurney has allowed me to use his copies of Sultantepe tablets. Dr. J. J. A. Van Dijk similarly provided me with his copies of two Tell Harmal tablets now in Baghdad, and gave me the benefit of his experience with these tablets.

To all these persons and institutions I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness and express my thanks.

Scholars everywhere are under a debt of gratitude to the Delegates of the Clarendon Press for undertaking the publication of such a work, and to their staff for the craftsmanship bestowed on it.

W. G. L.

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GENERAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

OWING to the rapid increase in knowledge in this field books soon become antiquated, and there is in 1959 no adequate work in English. The promised new edition of the *Cambridge Ancient History* should supply this want. Of older works, the relevant chapters in Volume III of the old *Cambridge Ancient History* (Cambridge, 1925, 1929) are worth mentioning. Among recent publications, the chapters on Mesopotamia in J. Finegan's *Light from the Ancient Past* (Princeton, 1946) give an up-to-date, if very brief, account. In German there are three recent works:

- A. Scharff and A. Moortgat, *Ägypten und Vorderasien im Altertum* (Munich, 1950), pp. 193 ff.
- A. Moortgat and G. Furlani in *Historia Mundi II: Grundlagen und Entfaltung der ältesten Hochkulturen* (Bern, 1953), pp. 224-330.
- H. Schmökel, *Geschichte des alten Vorderasien: Handbuch der Orientalistik*, ed. B. Spuler, II/3 (Leiden, 1957).

In French there is:

- G. Goossens in *Histoire universelle*, ed. R. Grousset and É. G. Léonard (Paris, 1956), I, pp. 287-495.

All four give a generally reliable account.

CULTURAL BACKGROUND

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RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND

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- É. Dhorme, *La Religion assyro-babylonienne* (Paris, 1910).
- G. Furlani, *La Religione babilonese e assira* (Bologna, 1928-9).
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- É. Dhorme, *Les Religions de Babylonie et d'Assyrie* (Paris, 1945, 2nd ed. 1949).
- F. M. Th. Böhl, *De Babylonisch-Assyrische Godsdienst*, in G. Van der Leeuw, *De Godsdiensten der Wereld*² I. 110-67 (Amsterdam, 1948).
- S. N. Kramer, *Sumerian Religion*, in V. Ferm, *Forgotten Religions* (New York, 1950), pp. 45-62.
- A. L. Oppenheim, *Assyro-Babylonian Religion*, in V. Ferm, op. cit., pp. 63-79.
- N. Schneider, *Die Religion der Sumerer und Akkader*, in F. König, *Christus und die Religionen der Erde* II (Vienna, 1951), pp. 383-439.
- F. M. Th. Böhl, *Die Religion der Babylonier und Assyrier*, in F. König, op. cit., pp. 441-98.
- J. Bottéro, *La Religion babylonienne* (Paris, 1952).
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- M. Rutten, *Les Religions asianiques* [including Sumerian], in M. Brillant and R. Aigrain, *Histoire des religions* IV (Paris, 1956), pp. 1-117.
 R. Largetment, *La Religion suméro-akkadienne*, in M. Brillant and R. Aigrain, op. cit., pp. 119-76.

LITERATURE

(i) *Descriptive Accounts*

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 W. von Soden, "Das Problem der zeitlichen Einordnung akkadischer Literaturwerke", *MDOG* 85 (1953), 14-26.
 S. N. Kramer, *From the Tablets of Sumer* (Indian Hills, Colorado, 1956).

(ii) *Collections of Texts in Translation*

- H. Zimmern, *Babylonische Hymnen und Gebete in Auswahl* (= AO 7/3, Leipzig, 1905).
 A. Ungnad in H. Gressmann, *Altorientalische Texte zum alten Testamente*¹ (Tübingen, 1909), pp. 1-171.
 H. Zimmern, *Babylonische Hymnen und Gebete, Zweite Auswahl* (= AO 13/1, Leipzig, 1911).
 R. W. Rogers, *Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament* (New York, 1912; 2nd ed. 1926).
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 E. Ebeling in H. Gressmann, *Altorientalische Texte zum alten Testament*² (Berlin/Leipzig, 1926), pp. 108-439.
 J. B. Pritchard, ed., *ANET* (Princeton, 1950; 2nd ed. 1955).
 A. Falkenstein and W. von Soden, *Sumerische und akkadische Hymnen und Gebete* (Zürich/Stuttgart, 1953).

ABBREVIATIONS AND REFERENCES

(i) TABLET SIGNATURES

British Museum, London

BM British Museum

DT Daily Telegraph

K Kouyunjik

Rm Rassam

Sm Smith

(Tablets given a registration date only, e.g. 80-7-19, 289, are also British Museum tablets.)

Museum of the Ancient Orient, Istanbul

A Assur

Bo Boghazköy

Si Sippar

University Museum, Philadelphia

CBS Catalogue of the Babylonian Section

N- Nippur

UM University Museum

Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin

BE Babylon Expedition

VAT Vorderasiatische Abteilung Tontafel

Iraq Museum, Baghdad

IM Iraq Museum

Archaeological Museum, Ankara

SU Sultantepe-Urfa

(ii) PUBLICATIONS CITED BY INITIALS AND SHORT TITLES OF WORKS FORMING PART OF A SERIES

AASOR *Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research*

AB *Assyriologische Bibliothek*

ABL R. F. Harper, *Assyrian and Babylonian Letters*

ABRT J. A. Craig, *Assyrian and Babylonian Religious Texts* (= *AB* XIII)

Afo *Archiv für Orientforschung*

AGM *Archiv für Geschichte der Medizin*

AJA *American Journal of Archaeology*

AJSL *American Journal of Semitic Languages*

AKA E. A. Wallis Budge and L. W. King, *Annals of the Kings of Assyria*

AKF *Archiv für Keilschriftforschung*

AMT R. Campbell Thompson, *Assyrian Medical Texts*

- ANET** J. B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*^{1,2}
AnOr *Analecta Orientalia*
AO *Der Alte Orient*
AOTU *Altorientalische Texte und Untersuchungen*
ARM *Archives royales de Mari* (texts in transliteration)
ArOr *Archiv Orientalni*
AS *Assyriological Studies*
Asarhaddon R. Borger, *Die Inschriften Asarhaddons Königs von Assyrien* (= *Archiv für Orientforschung*, Beiheft 9)
ASKT P. Haupt, *Akkadische und sumerische Keilschrifttexte* (= *AB* 1)
BA *Beiträge zur Assyriologie*
Bab *Babyloniaca*
BASOR *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* (S(upplementary) S(tudies))
BBK *Berliner Beiträge zur Keilschriftforschung*
BBR H. Zimmern, *Beiträge zur Kenntnis der babylonischen Religion* (= *AB* XII)
BBSst L. W. King, *Babylonian Boundary Stones*
BE *The Babylonian Expedition of the University of Pennsylvania* (*Series A* unless otherwise indicated)
Beer L. F. Hartman and A. L. Oppenheim, *On Beer and Brewing in Ancient Mesopotamia* (*JAO* Supplement No. 10)
Belleten *Türk Tarih Kurumu, Belleten*
BIN *Babylonian Inscriptions in the Collection of James B. Nies*
BiOr *Bibliotheca Orientalis*
BMS L. W. King, *Babylonian Magic and Sorcery*
BRM *Babylonian Records in the Library of J. Pierpont Morgan*
CAD I. J. Gelb, T. Jacobsen, B. Landsberger, and A. L. Oppenheim, *The Assyrian Dictionary . . . of the University of Chicago*
CRR 1, &c. *Compte rendu de la première (&c.) rencontre assyriologique internationale*
CT *Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum*
DP *Délégation en Perse, Mémoires*
Dreams A. L. Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East* (= *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, N.S., Volume 46, Part 3)
Fauna B. Landsberger, *Die Fauna des alten Mesopotamien* (= *Abhandlungen der philologisch-historischen Klasse der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Band 42, No. 6)
GAG W. von Soden, *Grundriss der akkadischen Grammatik* (= *AnOr* 33)
GCCI *Goucher College Cuneiform Inscriptions*
Gerichtsurkunden A. Falkenstein, *Die neusumerischen Gerichtsurkunden* (*Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse, Abhandlungen*, N.F., Heft 39-40, 44)
Glossar zu den neubabylonischen Briefen E. Ebeling, *Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse*, Jahrgang 1953, Heft 1
GSG A. Poebel, *Grundzüge der sumerischen Grammatik*
Hippologica A. Salonen, *Hippologica Accadica* (= *Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae*, Ser. B, Tom. 100)
HUCA *Hebrew Union College Annual*

- IF* *Zeitschrift für indogermanische Forschungen*
JAOs *Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JBL *Journal of Biblical Literature*
JCS *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*
JEOl *Jaarbericht van het Vooraziatisch-Egyptisch Genootschap, Ex Oriente Lux*
JNES *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JRAS *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*
JSS *Journal of Semitic Studies*
JTVI *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute*
KAH L. Messerschmidt and O. Schroeder, *Keilschrifttexte aus Assur historischen Inhalts* I, II
 (= *WVDOG* 16, 27)
KAJ E. Ebeling, *Keilschrifttexte aus Assur juristischen Inhalts* (= *WVDOG* 50)
KAR E. Ebeling, *Keilschrifttexte aus Assur religiösen Inhalts* I, II (= *WVDOG* 28, 34)
KAV O. Schroeder, *Keilschrifttexte aus Assur verschiedenen Inhalts* (= *WVDOG* 35)
KB *Keilschriftliche Bibliothek*
KBo H. H. Figulla et al., *Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazköi* I-VI (= *WVDOG* 30, 36)
KUB *Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi*
Landfahrzeuge A. Salonen, *Die Landfahrzeuge des alten Mesopotamien* (= *Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae*, Ser. B, Tom. 72/3)
LKA E. Ebeling, *Literarische Keilschrifttexte aus Assur*
LKU A. Falkenstein, *Literarische Keilschrifttexte aus Uruk*
LSS *Leipziger semitistische Studien*
LTBA *Die lexikalischen Tafelserien der Babylonier und Assyrer in den Berliner Museen*
MAD *Materials for the Assyrian Dictionary*
MAOG *Mitteilungen der altorientalischen Gesellschaft*
MCS *Manchester Cuneiform Studies*
MCT O. Neugebauer and A. Sachs, *Mathematical Cuneiform Texts*
MDOG *Mitteilungen der deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft*
MSL B. Landsberger et al., *Materialen zum sumerischen Lexikon*
MVAG *Mitteilungen der vorderasiatisch-ägyptischen Gesellschaft*
MVEOL *Mededeelingen en Verhandelingen van het Vooraziatisch-Egyptisch Genootschap, Ex Oriente Lux*
OECT *Oxford Editions of Cuneiform Texts*
OIP *Oriental Institute Publications* (Chicago)
OLZ *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung*
Or *Orientalia*
PB A. Deimel, *Pantheon Babylonicum*
PBS *Publications of the Babylonian Section, University Museum, University of Pennsylvania*
Physiognomatik F. R. Kraus, *Texte zur babylonischen Physiognomatik* (= *Archiv für Orientforschung*, Beiheft 3)
PRT E. G. Klauber, *Politisch-religiöse Texte aus der Sargonidenzeit*
PSBA *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*
R H. C. Rawlinson et al., *The Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia*
RA *Revue d'Assyriologie*

RB	<i>Revue biblique</i>
RLA	<i>Reallexikon der Assyriologie</i>
RSO	<i>Rivista degli studi orientali</i>
SBH	G. Reisner, <i>Sumerisch-babylonische Hymnen</i>
SEM	E. Chiera, <i>Sumerian Epics and Myths</i> (= OIP xv)
ŠL	A. Deimel, <i>Šumerisches Lexikon</i>
SLT	E. Chiera, <i>Sumerian Lexical Texts</i> (= OIP xi)
SO	<i>Studia Orientalia</i>
SSS	<i>Semitic Study Series</i>
STC	L. W. King, <i>The Seven Tablets of Creation</i>
STT	O. R. Gurney and J. J. Finkelstein, <i>The Sultantepe Tablets</i>
STVC	E. Chiera, <i>Sumerian Texts of Varied Contents</i> (= OIP xvi)
Tammuz-Liturgien	M. Witzel, <i>AnOr</i> 10
TCL	Musée du Louvre, Département des antiquités orientales, <i>Textes cunéiformes</i>
TDP	R. Labat, <i>Traité akkadien de Diagnostics et Pronostics médicaux</i>
VAB	<i>Vorderasiatische Bibliothek</i>
VS	<i>Vorderasiatische Schriftdenkmäler</i>
WO	<i>Die Welt des Orients</i>
WVDOG	<i>Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft</i>
YOS	<i>Yale Oriental Series, Babylonian Texts</i>
ZA	<i>Zeitschrift für Assyriologie</i>
ZDMG	<i>Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>

CITATIONS FROM AKKADIAN TEXTS

EXCEPT where otherwise stated, quotations from the following works follow the line numbering of the following editions:

- Code of Hammurabi (CH)* A. Deimel, E. Bergmann, A. Pohl, and R. Follet, *Codex Hammurabi*³
Enūma Eliš/Epic of Creation R. Labat, *Le Poème babylonien de la Création*
Epic of Gilgamesh R. Campbell Thompson, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*
Era Epic F. Gössmann, *Das Era-Epos*
Maqlū G. Meier, *Die assyrische Beschörungssammlung Maqlū* (= *AfO*, Beiheft 2)
Šurpu E. Reiner, *Šurpu* (= *AfO*, Beiheft 11)
Tukulti-Ninurta Epic E. Ebeling, *MAOG* XII/2 (see, however, *AfO* 18. 38-51 for a revision of the column numbers)

The following lexical texts are cited, with kind permission, from the editions of B. Landsberger, which are being published in the series *MSL*. Where the editions are as yet (1958) unpublished there can be no absolute guarantee that the line numbering will remain unchanged if new fragments should turn up. Where it has been possible to refer conveniently to a published copy, this has been given in addition to the tablet and line numbers. In some cases, however, such as where an unpublished text has been used, this has not been possible.

<i>á.A</i>	<i>Ea</i>	<i>Malku-šarru</i>
<i>Alam-lānu</i>	<i>Erim.ḫuš</i>	<i>Nabnitu</i>
<i>AN</i>	<i>Ḫargud (MSL v ff.)</i>	<i>OB. Lú</i>
<i>Antagal</i>	<i>Ḫarra (MSL v ff.)</i>	<i>Šumma izbu, Commentary</i>
<i>Á-Tablet</i>	<i>Izi-išātu</i>	
<i>Diri</i>	<i>Lú = amēlu</i>	

(For the full titles of these and the other lexical series see I. J. Gelb, *Standard Operating Procedure for the Assyrian Dictionary*, pp. 114-15. Note, however, that *OB. Lú* now replaces *LHC*.)

TIME CHART

B.C.	POLITICAL EVENTS	DEVELOPMENT OF LITERATURE
3000	Arrival of Sumerians(?)	
2900		Invention of writing on clay tablets for business purposes
2800		
2700		
2600		
2500	} Classical Sumerian period	The earliest traces of Sumerian literature
2400		
2300	} Old Akkadian period	Semitic Old Akkadian written in Sumerian script
2200		
2100	} The Guti invaders	} Sumerian Renaissance: many new texts written
2000		
1900	} Third Dynasty of Ur	
1800		
1800	} Isin-Larsa period	} Most Sumerian literature known from copies of this period. Development and spread of Babylonian literature
1700		
1600	} Old Babylonian period (First Dynasty of Babylon)	
1500		
1500	} Cassite period	} Sifting and editing of old texts; Sumerian texts provided with Babylonian translations. Many new texts written, both Babylonian and bilingual
1400		
1300		
1300		
1200	} Second Dynasty of Isin	} Rise of Marduk monolatry
1100		
1000		
900		
900	} Time of decline in the South Aramaeans settle in S. Mesopotamia	} Rise of Marduk monolatry
800		
700		
700		
600	} Late Babylonian empire	} Copies of traditional texts. Few original compositions
500		
500	} Persian period	} Copies of traditional texts from Uruk and Babylon. No new compositions
400		
300	} Seleucid period	
200		
100	} Parthian period	
0		
A.D. 100		The last cuneiform tablets, from Babylon

c. 1300. Copies of Babylonian texts from Hittite capital Boğazköy

c. 1100. Middle Assyrian copies of Babylonian texts

c. 650. Library of Ashurbanipal. A few new compositions

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THOUGHT AND LITERATURE IN ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA¹

'WISDOM' is strictly a misnomer as applied to Babylonian literature. As used for a literary genre the term belongs to Hebraic studies and is applied to Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. Here 'Wisdom' is a common topic and is extolled as the greatest virtue. While it embraces intellectual ability the emphasis is more on pious living: the wise man fears the Lord. This piety, however, is completely detached from law and ritual, which gives it a distinctive place in the Hebrew Bible. Babylonian has a term 'wisdom' (*nēmequ*), and several adjectives for 'wise' (*enqu*, *mūdū*, *ḥassu*, *etpēšu*), but only rarely are they used with a moral content (perhaps, e.g., *Counsels of Wisdom* 25). Generally 'wisdom' refers to skill in cult and magic lore, and the wise man is the initiate. One of the texts edited below begins, "I will praise the lord of wisdom", where Marduk is the lord, and his wisdom is skill in the rites of exorcism.

Though this term is thus foreign to ancient Mesopotamia,² it has been used for a group of texts which correspond in subject-matter with the Hebrew Wisdom books, and may be retained as a convenient short description. The sphere of these texts is what has been called philosophy since Greek times, though many scholars would demur to using this word for ancient Mesopotamian thought. Some of the works deal with ethics: practical advice on living (Chs. 4-5), others with intellectual problems inherent in the then current outlook on life (Chs. 2-3, and probably 6). Other types of literature not so intimately revealing thought patterns are included because they are conventionally classed as 'Wisdom': fables, popular sayings, and proverbs (Chs. 7-9). These are not discussed further in the present chapter, and the reader is referred to the introductions to the texts themselves. A case could be made for including many of the Babylonian epics in the Wisdom category, because they deal with cosmological problems. Their approach, however, is less direct, and they are clearly distinguished from the more openly rational attitude displayed in our texts. Since Wisdom as a category in Babylonian literature is nothing more than a

¹ This essay is not intended to replace the existing political and literary histories of ancient Mesopotamia, however inadequate they may be, but selects those matters which bear most directly on the Wisdom texts.

A certain basic knowledge of Sumerian and Babylonian civilizations is presumed.

² Cf. T. Fish's criticism of J. J. A. Van Dijk's book-title, *La Sagesse suméro-accadienne*, in *JSS* 1. 286-7.

group of texts which happen to cover roughly the same area, there is no precise canon by which to recognize them. In the present volume the writer has included all those works which obviously belong, but in the matter of border-line cases he has been compelled to use his own judgement.

The texts speak for themselves, but for a modern reader to gain anything approaching a full understanding it is necessary to know something of the intellectual world in which they were written. The attempt to supply this need is no light undertaking. The modern mind inevitably tries to fit ancient cogitations into the strait jacket of twentieth-century thinking, and any attempt to present the old *Weltanschauung* in modern terms can at the best be an inadequate introduction. Only by immersing oneself in the literature is it possible to feel the spirit which moves the writer. It must be made clear, too, that the only thought which can be recovered is that of a small group, presumably the intelligentsia of ancient society. Probably we shall never know how far the written forms of thought were understood and acknowledged by the mass of men and women. The handling of this written material—hymns, prayers, epics, &c.—has many pitfalls. Much Sumerian literature presents such difficulty to the translator that even the plain meaning of the words is often in question. Many texts are undated, and undatable. The ancients constantly rewrote old texts so that old and new stand side by side. We do not know how often in this process old words were reinterpreted to suit changed concepts. Even if a particular composition can be dated with certainty, can it be assumed that the outlook implied was characteristic of the age? Did individual authors hold views unorthodox in their age? One can only speculate whether further discoveries of contemporary documents would prove the existence of differing schools of thought. In addition to these problems the outlook and approach of the interpreter must inevitably result in a somewhat personal and subjective synthesis. The present attempt can make no claim to have escaped from these pitfalls, and the reader who is unable to make an independent evaluation of the conclusions offered is warned that other scholars might present a picture with quite substantial differences.

The first great civilization in Mesopotamia was that of the Sumerians. This people came from an uncertain region in the east or north-east and settled in the southernmost part of Mesopotamia. Their language has no known cognates, so that their origins are completely obscure. Territorially they did not expand beyond the southern end of the Tigris-Euphrates plain, and their system of government under city states prevented them from uniting to win an empire. Like the Greek city states, their chief contribution to mankind was cultural. In this sphere they established a pattern of civilization the influence of which lasted for many centuries after the Sumerians themselves had been absorbed into the infiltrating Semites. From the Sumerians the later Babylonians took over their system of writing, much of their religion, and some of their literature. It would, however, be a mistake to contrast Sumerian and Semite in the earliest historical periods, for so far back as our evidence reaches there is every indication of a peaceful symbiosis of the two stocks, though the Sumerians were culturally dominant. Nevertheless, the occurrence of Semitic

words in Sumerian from early times¹ must caution us against forgetting that there was a second element in Sumerian civilization. Native tradition offers confirmation in that the third king after the flood, according to the *Sumerian King List*,² bore the Semitic name Palâ-kinâtim.

Very few literary texts have been recovered from the Classical Sumerian period.³ Literature certainly existed, but probably much of it was oral, and no need was felt to write it down. There is no shortage of finds documenting the externals of religion—temples, names of deities, material of offerings, &c.—but they have little value for ascertaining the inner spirit, which is our concern. It is only from the period after the fall of the Semitic Agade Dynasty that literary documents are forthcoming. Under the Third Dynasty of Ur, Gudea, ruler of the town of Lagaš, made up for his lack of political independence by lavishing wealth on temples. Two large clay cylinders record in great detail his pious acts. From this Neo-Sumerian period, and from the following Isin-Larsa period, quite a number of works of literature have survived, though often in copies from the First Dynasty of Babylon: hymns, letters, parts of two codes of laws,⁴ literary debates, all of which contain unambiguous evidence of their date of composition. It is also in copies of the First Dynasty of Babylon that most of the surviving traditional Sumerian literature has been recovered. It may not be an accident of discovery that the only big finds of traditional Sumerian literature are of tablets written when Sumerian was almost dead as a spoken language; a study of the period as attempted below suggests the explanation. It is, however, certainly an accident that the excavations at Nippur have yielded most of the material. Other contemporary libraries must have existed, though they have not been found.

Many scholars doubt whether it is possible with present knowledge to reconstruct the pattern of Sumerian thought. Certainly any detailed exposition would be premature, but for our purpose it is sufficient to note certain similarities and contrasts between a Sumerian view of the universe and that which the Babylonians had adopted by 1000 B.C., and retained little altered until their ultimate extinction. It would, however, be misleading to present this contrast in purely ethnic terms. It is the result of a change and a development in Mesopotamian culture, and to what extent fresh immigrants can be considered responsible is a very difficult question. Our plan then is to describe the two ends of this development in broad terms, to sketch the process of development, and finally to elaborate certain aspects of the Babylonian view of life as reflected in the texts edited later in this book.

According to the Sumerians and Babylonians two classes of persons inhabited the universe: the human race and the gods. Pre-eminence belonged to the gods, though they were not all equal. At the lower end of the divine scale came a host of minor deities and

¹ The earliest may be damgara (*mkr) 'dealer, merchant', which occurs in the Fara texts (A. Deimel, *Die Inschriften von Fara* I, p. 53, no. 523; *ibid.* III, p. 5*; cf. A. Salonen, *SO* XI/1. 23¹), though its Semitic derivation has recently been doubted (A. Salonen, *Hippologica*, 247). For other certain Semitic loans see A. Salonen, *SO* XI/1. 23¹, and A. Falkenstein, *CRR* II. 13.

² *AS* II.

³ Cf. A. Falkenstein, *CRR* II. 18-19; G. A. Barton, *Miscellaneous Babylonian Inscriptions*, no. 1; S. N. Kramer, *From the Tablets of Sumer*, p. 106.

⁴ The codes are of Urnammu (S. N. Kramer and A. Falkenstein, *Or* N.S. 23. 40-51) and Lipit-Ishtar (F. R. Steele, *AJA* 52. 425-50).

demons, while a trinity of great gods, Anu, Enlil, and Ea, stood at their head. A modern scholar will observe that many of these gods are personifications of parts or aspects of nature. The sun and moon gods are obvious examples. The goddess Inanna (Sumerian), or Ištar (Babylonian), personifies love and procreation. The great gods are no exceptions: An (Anu) is the Sumerian word 'heaven', and that was his sphere. Enki (Sumerian) or Ea (Babylonian) was lord of a subterranean lake, strictly to be distinguished from the underworld. Enlil's name means 'Lord Wind', so that his cosmic location was between that of the other two. In the beginning, according to Sumerian and Babylonian speculations, only the gods had existed. Man was a later creation, and was intended as a servant of the gods. He had therefore duties to perform to his divine lords, and could offend them. This was 'sin', and the offence might be transgressing a ritual taboo or oppressing the widow and orphan. There was no distinction such as we tend to make between moral sin and ritual omission. The unwitting ritual neglect was an abomination to the gods. The Sumerian, and later Babylonian, pantheon was the elaboration of the theologians. In historical times their task consisted in reducing to an ordered whole all the gods which had their cognizance. Despite the large amount of duplication, since each locality had its own gods, conservative feeling did not allow the rejection of any one. Gods of wide popularity, or gods of politically important cities, were put at the top of the hierarchy, and lesser ones followed, or even became the attendants of the greater. In some cases, however, a syncretism of similar gods from different sources of origin took place, in which the more important took over the names and attributes of the lesser. Also in the course of time a more recent god might gradually take over the rank of an older one. Ningirsu, a local god of the Sumerian city Lagaš, and also a god of war, was later swallowed up in Ninurta, the popular war god of the Babylonians.

Some of the items in the preceding paragraph may not apply to the earliest periods of Sumerian history, but that is of no consequence here, where the aim is to lay the foundations on which the Babylonians rested. The most profound change which took place within these general conceptions between 2000 and 1000 B.C. was in the nature of the gods. When two Sumerian city states went to war the gods of each side were also participants. If the one state prevailed and sacked the other city, the local god shared in the disaster. This outlook is found in the Sumerian lamentations over cities¹ in which the god or goddess participates in the grief for his or her plundered home. The attitude of the conquered citizens to the victorious deity is vividly portrayed in the document written by a loyal citizen of Lagaš after the sack of his town by the men of the neighbouring Umma. After lamenting the sacking he adds: "As for Lugalzaggisi, ruler of Umma, may Nidaba his goddess bear this guilt on her neck."² In later times the Assyrians, close imitators of their southern neighbours in most matters of culture, plundered Babylon. First, about 1220 B.C. under Tukulti-Ninurta I, who has left an account in the form of an historical

¹ Cf. *AS* 12, lines 46-47 = 63-64:

"Thy lamentation which is bitter—how long
will it grieve thy weeping lord?"

Thy lamentation which is bitter—how long
will it grieve thy weeping Nanna?"

² *VAB* 1. 58, III. 11-14. 3.

epic. At the beginning the writer portrays the gods of the Babylonian cities as angry with Kaštiliaš, the king, for his wickedness.¹ Consequently they forsake their cities, leaving them unprotected, so that an Assyrian victory follows. In the final battle of the campaign all the gods are on the side of Tukulti-Ninurta.² In this way was Babylon plundered. Also Sennacherib most savagely destroyed the city of Babylon. His successor Esarhaddon explains this disaster as follows:

They (the citizens of Babylon) oppressed the weak, and gave him into the power of the strong. Inside the city there was tyranny, the receiving of bribes; every day without fail they plundered each other's goods; the son cursed his father in the street, the slave [abjured] his master, [the slave girl] did not listen to her mistress . . . they put an end to offerings and entered into conspiracies . . . they laid hands on the property of Esagil, the temple of the gods, and sold silver, gold and precious stones to the land of Elam . . . Marduk, the Enlil of the gods, was angry and devised evil to overwhelm the land and destroy the peoples.³

In the quotations given we have cited for the Sumerians, the complaints of the conquered, and for the Babylonians, the judgement of the victors. However, it is abundantly clear that the Babylonians themselves would have accepted the second part of the judgement, that the gods were angry with them, even if they did not confess to the crimes with which they are charged. In the Babylonian *Era Epic* when the destructive god Era was planning to destroy mankind he persuades Marduk to vacate his shrine, so that the destruction planned received the consent of Marduk.⁴ A Late-Babylonian king, Nabonidus, freely mentions the gods' anger with Babylon, shown by their absenting themselves from their shrines.⁵

Thus between 2000 and 1000 B.C. the gods became more amicably disposed to each other, and learnt to act in unison. The same change is seen in the epic literature. The modern reader is immediately struck by the amoral character of the Sumerian gods in the epics. In one Inanna, goddess of Uruk, wishes to obtain certain things from Enki, so she visits him and together they enjoy a banquet, part of which was alcoholic. While he is under the influence of the food and drink Inanna easily obtains her wish, and at once makes off for Uruk with the spoils. On recovering Enki realizes his folly, and the remainder of the story is a contest between the cunning Enki, who tries to have the boat stopped, and Inanna, who evades all the attempts at stopping her and reaches her destination.⁶ In another epic, the *Paradise Myth*, Enki mates with the goddess Ninḥursag, from which union a daughter is born. Enki then mates with the daughter, and a granddaughter is born. The previous performance is repeated, but Ninḥursag warns the fourth generation, so that Enki's advances are now met with a demand for certain plants and fruits. Enki is able to supply these bridal gifts, and mating takes place. This union, however, produces plants, which the uninhibited Enki proceeds to taste. For this deed Ninḥursag curses him,

¹ *AfO* 18. 42. 33-46.

² *MAOG* XII/2. 7. 23 ff.

³ R. Borger, *Asarhaddon*, pp. 12-13. The translation is a combination of pieces from different inscriptions.

⁴ End of Tablet I.

⁵ *VAB* IV. 284, col. x.

⁶ See S. N. Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology*, pp. 64-68.

so that he starts to wither away, and it is only by the intervention of all the gods in council that Ninḫursag is ultimately persuaded to restore Enki to health.¹

When considering Babylonian epics it is necessary to bear in mind how much is directly owed to Sumerian forerunners. The *Descent of Iṣtar*, to take the obvious example, is nothing but a free rewriting of the Sumerian *Descent of Inanna*. Even where the actual story is not proved to be of Sumerian origin the motifs and phraseology can be strongly influenced by Sumerian. It will be understood that Babylonian epics are under a burden of tradition, for which their change in outlook is all the more remarkable. The nearest approach to Enki's libertinism in the whole range of Babylonian literature is in an incantation which describes how Sin, the moon god, fell in love with one of his cows called Geme-Suena ('Handmaid-of-Sin'), assumed the form of a bull, and secretly mated with her.² It is probably one of those old elements which have survived in incantations with their "fresh earthy pregnancy", to quote a phrase of Landsberger,³ and this metamorphosis of the god is better paralleled in Canaanite and classical Greek myths than in Mesopotamian sources.⁴ In general the gods of Babylonian epics are more respectable, if more dull. Era, as already noted, does not let loose destruction without first persuading Marduk and the other gods of its desirability. In the *Gilgameš Epic* Iṣtar wishes to send a destructive divine bull to earth for revenge on Gilgameš, who had insulted her. By correct etiquette she begs permission from her father Anu, who only grants it after making careful inquiry if his daughter's intemperate revenge may not lead to the extinction of mankind by famine. Iṣtar satisfies her father, and use of the divine bull is sanctioned.⁵ Another daughter of Anu, the demon Lamaštu, so provoked her father by her improper designs that he forthwith kicked her from heaven to earth.⁶ In divine families naughty children have to be punished just as among humans. Two Babylonian epics do centre on fighting among the gods: the *Zū Myth*, in which the demon god Zū steals the Tablet of Destiny (a literal cuneiform tablet laying down the *status quo*), and the *Epic of Creation*, in which the old generation of gods, angry with the younger for its noise, try to destroy them, but are themselves destroyed by Marduk. In both of these epics the main body of gods are assumed to be in the right. Zū, the irresponsible demon, has robbed them of a thing the loss of which could bring chaos on the universe. In the *Epic of Creation* a primeval monster is threatening extinction on the gods and has to be faced. The responsible gods sit in committee like a group of civil servants, until a junior member is prevailed upon to take up the cause.

Despite the odd misdemeanour, the Mesopotamian gods learnt the art of being good citizens by 1000 B.C. The very fact that many of the old myths, such as the *Paradise Myth*, were not passed on is evidence of the change of outlook.

Finally, the change is also seen in the attitude to personal gods and demons. Demons

¹ Edited by S. N. Kramer, *BASOR* Supplementary Studies, 1. Cf. also *ANET* 37-41 and H. Frankfort and others, *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man*, pp. 157-60 = *Before Philosophy*, 170-4.

² *KAR* 196 rev. II and K 2413 rev. (*RSO* IV, Tav. 11). Cf. E. Ebeling, *AGM* 14. 68; F. M. Th. Böhl,

JEOL IV. 202-4; S. Langdon, *Semitic Mythology*, p. 97.

³ *JNES* 14. 14.

⁴ *ANET* 139. v; Roscher, *Lexikon* 11/1. 263 ff.

⁵ Tablet 6.

⁶ *BIN* IV. 126 = *Or* N.S. 25. 141-8.

in all periods were bent on ill. The problem of how to escape their attacks became easier as time passed. In early times no one could be certain of immunity. In the second millennium the belief arose that the personal god could protect from demons, in return for services, that is offerings, rendered:

One who has no god, as he walks along the street,
Headache [a disease demon] envelops him like a garment.¹

Though the personal god was necessarily a small god, he was able to take his client's case to the greater gods, and to see that it received attention.²

The three points listed—the nature of the gods' participation in the affairs of the world, the conduct of the gods to each other, and the restraining power of the personal gods—all reflect one fundamental change. The theology of the Sumerians as reflected in what seem to be the older myths presents an accurate reflection of the world from which they spring. The forces of nature can be brutal and indiscriminate; so were the gods. Nature knows no modesty; nor did the gods. This is not to deny that some Sumerian thinkers may have progressed beyond this stage, but many epics do reflect this outlook. It may seem primitive to a modern mind, but its abstinence from adding anything in interpretation gives it a permanent value. In contrast the Babylonians grappled with facts and tried to reduce the conflicting elements in the universe to parts of a harmonious whole. No longer using the analogy of natural forces, they imagined their gods in their own image, and tried to fit the universe into moral laws springing from the human conscience. Like all such attempts this raises intellectual and moral difficulties, and these are the background against which the texts here edited are to be set. First, however, the transitional period must be studied.

The years 1900–1700 were a period of political upheaval, ending in the establishment of the First Dynasty of Babylon over the whole of southern Mesopotamia. As a people the Sumerians had almost disappeared, though leaving a legacy of culture behind them. With our concern for the intellectual life we have to restrict consideration of these two centuries to the forces at work among the thinkers of the time. On the one hand there was a force favouring conservatism, on the other a force tending to change.

The conservative force was to be found in the scribal quarters of the old Sumerian centres. That of Nippur is best known,³ though other cities must have had their counterparts. Here, with centuries of tradition behind them, lived and worked the most learned men of their day. They had a virtual monopoly of learning since they and their pupils, who were trained in the *Eduḫba* ('Tablet-House'), were the only educated persons. Although the scribal art was not an hereditary right, if we may believe a Sumerian satire on school life,⁴ the length of the training could not but permeate the apprentices in this

¹ CT 17. 14, "O" 7–10; cf. CT 17. 19. 5–6 and 16/2. 14–19.
Šurpu VII. 19–20.

² See von Soden, *ZDMG* 89. 143–69.

³ University Museum, *Bulletin*, Philadelphia, vol. *JAOs* 69. 199–215.

⁴ Published by S. N. Kramer, *Schooldays* (*Museum Monographs*, University Museum, Philadelphia), and in

art with the spirit of their teachers. One point of organization on which we are regrettably ill-informed is the relation of the scribes to the temple. General considerations would lead us to suppose that the scribal schools were attached to a temple, but we are in no position either to affirm or to deny if all scribes of the schools were *ipso facto* priests. The satire on the *Eduḫba* suggests a very secular spirit, but schoolboy activities do not constitute a valuable criterion. Because of their traditions these scholars were guardians of Sumerian literature, and so ideas. Though this was a rearguard action it was no mere rattling of dry bones. The Third Dynasty of Ur and the Isin-Larsa period had been prolific in new Sumerian compositions of many types, and many traditional works which were probably written down for the first time in these periods show signs of lateness, though the material is doubtless early.¹ It may be that a sense of pending loss prompted the writing down of works which had previously been oral, just as the fall of Jerusalem was a factor in the production of a written Mishnah. Thus in producing new and revising old texts there was little occasion to consider a literature in the vernacular. Though there is no reason to suppose that the old Sumerian scribal centres actively opposed the creation of a Babylonian literature, the overwhelming percentage of Sumerian texts recovered from Old Babylonian Nippur shows where their real interests lay.

Politically the Sumerians gave way to Semites. The forces of reform in literature were also Semitic, though both an old and a new Semitic element combined before much impact on Sumerian civilization was possible. Some variety of Semites had been living peacefully among the Sumerians from the beginning, and, as already observed, made at least a small contribution to Sumerian civilization. Outside the Sumerian centres in southern Mesopotamia a Semitic culture was more free to develop, though it owed many things to the brilliance of the southern cities. An impetus to Semitic creativity was given by the Agade Dynasty, which made common use of Semitic Akkadian instead of Sumerian for royal inscriptions. Historians of art consider this dynasty a profound influence on later Mesopotamian productions.² In the matter of thought and literature we are ill-informed. The earliest surviving works of Babylonian literature show a maturity which presumes a long development. The beginnings must certainly go back to the Agade Dynasty period, if not earlier, and from this period a school exercise tablet has been found inscribed with part of an historical writing.³ The conquests of Sargon and Narām-Sin doubtless helped to spread Old Akkadian culture in the regions of the upper Euphrates and Tigris, but Mari on the middle Euphrates already had its own dialect of Old Akkadian,⁴ and a fine school of local artists.

A new wave of Semitic migration started about 2000 B.C., and the invaders, called Amorites, moved down the Euphrates valley first into the Old Akkadian culture of places like Mari, and eventually into the Sumerian centres. Though Semitic-speaking, they belonged to a different branch of the stock from the Old Akkadians. Their original

¹ See A. Falkenstein, *RCC* II, 12-27.

³ I. J. Gelb, *MAD* I, no. 172.

² e.g. H. Frankfort, *The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient*, ch. 3.

⁴ *RA* 50, 1-10.

language can be recovered only from their personal names, since no documents written in Amorite have been found. The onomasticon reveals a Semitic dialect closely akin to Canaanite,¹ and their very name marks them as an offshoot of this group. It would be a mistake to regard their migration as a barbarian descent on Rome. These people had a culture of their own in the upper Euphrates area which owed something to the Sumerians, and their movement was gradual, so that when they reached the south they no longer spoke a kind of early Canaanite, but an Old Babylonian dialect. Unfortunately the details of this period in the crucial areas of the upper and middle Euphrates are unknown, which is particularly regrettable because it was a very significant phase for the Babylonian language, literature, and presumably thought. In script and language there is a great gulf between Old Akkadian and Old Babylonian. Old Akkadian script was a pioneer attempt at using Sumerian writing to express a totally different language. When the curtain of obscurity is lifted, the Old Babylonian culture appears fully developed, vast strides have been made towards perfecting cuneiform script as a means of writing Semitic Babylonian, and a brilliant classical literature is written in it.

As already commented, the Sumerian centres apparently remained aloof from this development. Several corroborative lines of evidence show that the rise of Babylonian literature took place outside the area where Sumerian traditions were strong. The tablets recovered from the library, if it was such, of Tell Harmal, in the Diyala region, can be contrasted with those of contemporary Nippur. In the literary texts from Tell Harmal there are about equal numbers of Babylonian and Sumerian tablets, and in addition there is a large group of bilingual tablets.² Another phenomenon is the obvious lack of any one cultural centre of Old Babylonian literature. The Diyala region writes literature in its own dialect.³ The towns of Mari⁴ and Babylon⁵ do the same. In far Cappadocia the Assyrian merchants of a century or two earlier had literature written in the Old Assyrian dialect.⁶ The impression is given of literary traditions springing up simultaneously in the regions where Sumerian literature was not strongly entrenched. The local traditions of writing seem strong, and show no sign of immaturity or experiment. There was certainly no opposition to Sumerian, for the odd Sumerian composition was written as far afield as Mari,⁷ and in religion some Sumerian was probably used. At least the liturgy of a Mari ritual has Sumerian titles.⁸ An incidental pointer to the origin and direction of reform comes from script. The history of Babylonian script, apart from a few archaizing tendencies, is the gradual introduction of signs to distinguish sounds which were not known, or not distinguished, in Sumerian script. Thus Babylonian writing at first did not

¹ The names have been studied by Th. Bauer, *Die Ostkanaaner*, and by C-F. Jean in *Studia Mariana*, pp. 63-98.

² Reports on the excavations at Tell Harmal, and publications of texts, have appeared in the following volumes of *Sumer*: II. 19-30; III. 48-83; IV. 52-54, 63-102, 137-8; V. 34-86, 136-43; VI. 4-5, 39-54; VII. 28-45, 126-55; XI, pls. I-XVI, nos. 3, 4, 9, 10; XIII. 65-115.

³ *JNES* 14. 14-21; 17. 56-58; cf. *JCS* 9. 31-35.

⁴ *RA* 35. 1-13; 36. 12.

⁵ The dialect of Babylon is well known from the Hammurabi correspondence.

⁶ *JNES* 14. 17; *BIN* IV. 126 = *Or N.S.* 25. 141-8.

⁷ There is an as yet unpublished bilingual letter addressed to the king of Mari, a literary composition of course (*Syria* 20. 100).

⁸ *RA* 35. 1-13.

distinguish *g* and *q*. The introduction of separate signs for the *q* sound began first in Mari, Ešnunna, and Elam, and only later was this invention adopted in the more conservative Babylon. Being less bound by tradition, the peripheral areas were hot-beds of reform. As yet, however, this stream of ideas moving inwards had little impact on the Sumerian centres. The source of inspiration may well have been in the mingling of the Amorites with the long-established Old Akkadians. Cross-pollination in cultural matters is often the cause of increased fertility. Some of the dynamic achievements of the Amorites in politics are well known. An Amorite, Išbi-Era, "the man of Mari", took over when the Third Dynasty of Ur fell. Hammurabi united southern Mesopotamia under him, and ruled more territory and confirmed a longer dynasty than any known Sumerian dynasty. Wherever the Amorites settled they adopted the greater part of the conquered civilization, but since their introduction to southern Mesopotamia was through such places as Mari they arrived at their ultimate destinations with a good measure of Babylonian culture.

Old Babylonian literature is classical in every sense. It has vigour and freshness which was never matched later. Both the hymns and epics are outstanding, and even the omens, in which one does not look for beauty or style, promise a wider range of fates than the late-period texts. The two important questions in connexion with Old Babylonian literature are: (i) In what way does its outlook differ from Sumerian thought? (ii) To what are the changes to be attributed?

The chief differences are implicit in the change of conception about the gods which has already been described. So long as the gods were simple personifications of parts or aspects of nature a wonderful reality pervaded thought. But as soon as human reason tries to impose a man-made purpose on the universe, intellectual problems arise. The big problem in Babylonian thought was that of justice. If the great gods in council controlled the universe, and if they ruled it in justice, why . . . ? All kinds of very real difficulties had to be faced, and the position must have been worsened by the growth of law codes, from the Third Dynasty of Ur onwards. If, in the microcosm, a matter could be taken to law and redress secured, why, in the macrocosm, should one not take up matters with the gods? The most common complaint is virtually about a broken contract. A man served his god faithfully, but did not secure health and prosperity in return. The problem of the righteous sufferer was certainly implicit from the time of the Third Dynasty of Ur. An Akkadian name of this period is *Mina-arni*, 'What-is-my-guilt?',¹ which implies the line of reasoning: I have suffered: I must have done wrong: What can it be? Suffering necessarily implies guilt. A Sumerian text is thought to deal with this problem more directly, though the difficulties of translation are considerable.² Two religious texts on tablets written during the First Dynasty of Babylon illustrate the problem. The first is a Babylonian dialogue between a man and his god, in which the man says, "The crime which I did I know not",³ the same thought as, "What is my guilt?" The second takes the matter a

¹ E. Chiera, *Selected Temple Accounts from Telloh, Yokha and Drehem* 29. vi. 12.

² Edited by S. N. Kramer in *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum*, vol. III. 170-82.

³ *RB* 59. 239-50, line 13. Since J. Nougayrol, the first editor, and others following him (e.g. Van Dijk, *La Sagesse*, pp. 120-1) have taken this text as "Une Version ancienne du 'Juste Souffrant'", some account

step farther. This is a bilingual Sumero-Babylonian text in which the speaker says, "I have been treated as one who has committed a sin against his god".¹ Here the speaker evidently does not acknowledge any personal sin, though he finds himself beset with what should be the punishment for sin. Since two Sumerian texts, one being bilingual, know the problem of the righteous sufferer, it must have arisen in the Sumerian academies of at least the Isin-Larsa period, and perhaps under the Third Dynasty of Ur. It may then be a simple Mesopotamian development owing nothing to outside influences. No answers to this problem have yet been found in Old Babylonian texts, but so few texts have been recovered that this may well be an accident. The universal incidence of death seemed another injustice, since the ancient Mesopotamians looked for no rewards or bliss in the afterlife. The gods lived for ever, why not man? The Old Babylonian *Epic of Gilgameš* is written around this topic. Several Sumerian Gilgameš stories were taken, one of which, *Gilgameš and the Land of the Living*, describes how he was tormented by the thought of death and conceived a desire to achieve immortal fame by some outstanding deed. To this known Sumerian material the Semitic writer added much other legendary matter of uncertain origin and fused the whole together with the fear of death. In the end the inevitability of death has to be acknowledged, and Gilgameš is counselled on how to face life with this burden:

of it is demanded here. Nougayrol has certainly rendered a service in publishing this difficult text, and von Soden (*Or* N.S. 26. 315-19) has advanced the study of it with collations and his usual acumen. The present writer has also collated the tablet, but would hesitate to offer a complete edition for the reason of von Soden: only repeated collation of the original and prolonged study would yield even approximate results. In certain passages where Nougayrol and von Soden agree as to the reading, the present writer would hesitate to affirm its correctness. A number of von Soden's corrections were, however, seen independently by the writer, and he ventures to offer a further one for 26b: *ma-la al!-z[e]!-nu?-k[u]*? ("I have forgotten neither the extent of your kindness to me nor) the extent of my blasphemy against you" (cf. note on *Counsels of Wisdom* 29). As to the general scope and purpose of the work, the writer suggests the following modifications of Nougayrol's views:

(i) After an introduction in narrative form (1-11) the sufferer seems to speak, and apparently continues until line 38. The strophe 39-47 is badly preserved, but 45-47 are again narrative and introduce the reply of the god, which follows in 48-67. The intermediary, a friend, which Nougayrol assumes, seems not to exist. *ru-i-š* in the first line, if derived from *ru'um* 'companion', would mean not "pour son ami", but *amice* 'in a friendly fashion'. Van Dijk, however, loc. cit., has questioned this etymology. The only other passage which could imply a mediator is 43b as read by von Soden: *šu-li-ia₂-šu qā-qā-ar-šu* "lasst ihn aufsteigen zur

Erd(oberfläche)". This could be a petition on behalf of the sufferer spoken by a friend or priest. Until the context of this line is recovered it would be unwise to build on it.

(ii) There is no evidence that this text deals with a righteous sufferer. Its being a dialogue between a man and his god proves nothing. Ashurbanipal in a famous text holds a discussion with Nābū, but not in the part of a righteous sufferer (*VAB* VII. 342-51). In 13 "the crime which I did I know not" can be an admission of sin, not a denial of it. The following line may also be a confession of sin. As seen by the writer 14 is to be read: *'u!-[ka-ab-bi-i]s! an-zi-il-la-ka a-na-k[u i]k-ki-ba-am li-im-na-ma am- × [×] × × × ×* "I have trespassed against you, I have . . . a wicked abomination". These lines could, of course, be interpreted as questions, but even so they would not necessarily imply a negative answer. Most probably, however, the sufferer is here admitting his sin in the hope of forgiveness, and so prosperity. The answer of the god also does not make absolutely clear if the suffering is a consequence of sin or not. The general theme is summed up in the words *li-ib-bu-uk la li-li-im-mi-in* "Do not be downhearted" (48). However, after a promise of health (61) the sufferer is enjoined to perform charitable deeds (62-65), which could be interpreted as a penance.

(iii) The last two lines read more like a liturgical formula than a catch-line.

¹ Unpublished, but the relevant lines are cited in *CAD*, vol. H, 208b. Cf. in later texts E. Ebeling, *Handerhebung*, p. 134. 68; *VAB* VII. 252. 15.

Gilgameš, where are you rushing?
 The life which you seek you will not find,
 For when the gods created mankind
 They assigned death to men,
 But held life in their keeping.
 As for yourself, Gilgameš, fill your belly,
 Day and night be happy,
 Every day have pleasure,
 Day and night dance and rejoice,
 Put on clean clothes,
 Wash your head, bathe in water,
 Gaze on the little one who holds your hand,
 Let your spouse be happy in your bosom. (Tablet 10, Old Babylonian
 version, col. III)

This philosophy has not one word about religion, and is a moderate hedonism. Among the letters which Babylonians wrote to their personal gods there is also found in this period a very demanding tone. Unless satisfaction is secured, the gods can expect to be dropped, and will then get no offerings. It is not known how widespread this truculent attitude was, but it does suggest an overhasty exploitation of the newly grasped concept of cosmic justice.

While internal development is certainly a factor in the growth of Mesopotamian thought, outside influence also has to be recognized. The most striking case is seen in the development of the Sumerian text *Gilgameš and the Land of the Living*. The feat which Gilgameš set himself was the cutting down of cedar-trees on a remote mountain which was guarded by an ogre. The Sumerian writer clearly had no information about this mountain. The name is not given, and it is presented as a veritable fairyland. When this story was incorporated into the Babylonian *Gilgameš Epic* this skeleton became covered with flesh and sinews. The mountain is expressly named as Mount Hermon in the Lebanon range, and the mention of the Euphrates reveals an exact knowledge of the way cedar logs would be brought from Lebanon to Babylonia. The Amorites had come from this general area of Syria and could fill in details that a Sumerian writer would be ignorant of. What is more, this Mount Hermon is said to be the seat of the Sumerian pantheon!¹ This is a completely Canaanite idea, for in the Canaanite myths from Ras Shamra, the ancient Ugarit, gods do in fact reside on Mount Hermon, just as Yahweh is associated with Sinai.

Another item of Old Babylonian civilization which is probably an Amorite importation is the *lex talionis* in the law code of Hammurabi.² Contrary to what might be expected from an oversimplified evolutionary approach, the *lex talionis* is a late-comer in Mesopotamian law. The Sumerian code of Urnammu (Third Dynasty of Ur) and the Babylonian

¹ JNES 16. 256 rev. 13 and 20; *Gilgameš* 5. i. 6. The fact of the gods' dwelling on the mountain explains the dreams received by Gilgameš and Enkidu, and the

punishment which Enkidu suffered for his part in the exploit.

² §§ 196-201 (*ANET* 175).

laws of Ešnunna (c. 1850 B.C.) prescribe monetary payments for bodily injuries.¹ It is first in the *Code of Hammurabi* that the *lex talionis* appears, and its spirit pervades many laws not concerned with bodily injury, though it applies to free citizens only. The *Book of the Covenant* (Exodus 21–23) lays down “eye for eye, tooth for tooth”, and as this collection of laws is from the point of view of legal draftsmanship and social development less advanced than the *Code of Hammurabi*, its later date does not compel the assumption of possible dependence on the *Code of Hammurabi*. More probably Hammurabi depends on an old Amorite legal principle.

The reign of Hammurabi was politically important, but equally significant for culture. He destroyed Mari and unified control which had previously rested with many cities. Whether for this reason only, or for other reasons also, the diversity of Mesopotamian culture ended. The details of this presumably gradual process are lost, but when the obscure end of the First Dynasty of Babylon and the equally obscure beginning of the Cassite period are over, we find many of the old Sumerian cities such as Nippur and Uruk back as leaders of culture, but with the significant addition of Babylon. Henceforth they set the tone, and all deviations were provincialisms. Their culture was now Babylonian, though tradition died hard; old Sumerian texts continued to be copied, though now often with an interlinear Babylonian translation, and new Sumerian texts were even composed.

The age of the Cassite kings was the second and last great constructive period in the history of Babylonian literature. It is, therefore, all the more regrettable that so little is known about it. A new small king list of the following dynasty was published in 1956, and this necessitated considerable emendations in all the hitherto reconstructed lists for that period.² Knowledge of the preceding Cassite period is much the same. Some account of conditions can, however, be given. Compared with the hey-day of the First Dynasty of Babylon, the country was immeasurably poorer, and the foreign rulers had none of the glory of a Hammurabi. Though they may have arrived as barbarians, they soon settled down and began to ape the culture of the conquered land. That their rule should have lasted for about four centuries is proof either of their ability as rulers, or of the dispiritedness of the subjects. Perhaps both reasons contributed. A feudal organization existed, in which nobles were granted pieces of land, and in many ways the Cassite period can be considered the Middle Ages of Babylonian history. Politically the whole land seemed in a stagnant phase, but certain social changes certainly began in this time. ‘Guilds’, or ‘families’, were springing up. Those in a particular trade or profession used the name of a particular person in their calling much as we use our surnames: “X son of Y” in the Cassite period often refers to profession rather than to parentage. One of these families can be traced back to the fourteenth century. Others are shown to be Cassite period by their names. The importance of this institution for literature is that scribal ‘families’, using the name of a scribal ancestor, existed. Moreover, in Uruk and Babylon at least, the same names continued in use by scribes into Seleucid and Parthian times, so that the continuity

¹ Urnammu laws 17 and 18 (*Or N.S.* 23. 48); *Laws of Ešnunna* 42–48 (*ANET* 163).

² A. Poebel, *AS* 15.

of tradition is established. The great span of time involved makes it improbable that these 'families' multiplied by physical descent only. No doubt apprentices were adopted. Although the ancestors belonged to particular professions and cities, in time their descendants included many who neither lived in the original town, nor belonged to the guild. The Uruk scribal families are best documented. From the ninth to the second century B.C. the scribes of these families were officers of the temple, and since nothing of an *Edubba* is heard of after the First Dynasty of Babylon, learning must have been the handmaid of religion, whether or not this was the case earlier. The continuity of tradition suggests that in the Cassite period the same organization prevailed. The Cassite-period scholars then were clerics. Their activity was twofold: preserving their heritage, and continuing the tradition. In their first part they were transcribers and editors. Part of a catalogue has been preserved in the libraries of Ashurbanipal which gives a series of literary works, each of which is said to be "according to" an editor of a particular town. Several of the editors, or their 'fathers', have been identified as scribal ancestors. For example, the *Gilgameš Epic* is "according to Sin-liqi-unninni", an ancestor from Uruk.¹ The task of editing is not to be underestimated. It often involved recasting and rewriting. In some cases, like *Enuma Anu Enlil*, several editions circulated in late times, presumably the product of the Cassite-period scholars of several towns. Often, however, only a single *textus receptus* survived, but the reasons for such textual uniformity are not known. The original compositions of the Cassite period are quite different in spirit from the Old Babylonian works, in that the writers were conscious of the fine tradition to which they were heirs. They tended to live in the past, and lacked the inspiration of the earlier works. Even in language this is apparent. Middle Babylonian, the contemporary vernacular, is a development on Old Babylonian, but it was not generally used for literature. A special literary dialect, Standard Babylonian, was created during the Cassite period, which, so far as our knowledge goes, was never a spoken dialect. It appears to be the result of taking Middle Babylonian as a basis and attempting to restore certain Old Babylonian forms. It is a curiosity that some phonetic features are morphologically older than Old Babylonian! There is no possible confusion between Standard and Old Babylonian. As in language, so in style. Self-consciousness results in a striving for stylistic effect, and some Cassite-period compositions are overloaded with rare words. The authors betray their very academic background and training.

In matters of thought it is possible to give a reasonably complete survey of the outlook and doubts of Cassite-period scholars. It must be stressed that some parts of the whole may in fact go back to Old Babylonian times, though lack of evidence prevents a decision. The main differences between surviving Old Babylonian texts and works either written or edited in the Cassite period are (i) a fuller understanding of the problems involved in the traditional approach to the universe, (ii) less confidence and self-assertion.

To deal with the first. The basic assumption of the gods ruling the universe in justice is maintained. Thus all misfortune and suffering should be punishment for neglect. Either

¹ For more details on the subject of ancestors, both scribal and otherwise, see JCS 11. 1-14 and 112.

the great gods themselves could invoke punishment, or the personal gods would withdraw their protection so that evil demons rushed in. The existence of such powers seems never to have been doubted, and no moral difficulty was felt since the just gods exercised a firm control over them. In this way the whole system of magic was retained, though to a modern western mind there is something incompatible with just gods ruling the universe, yet demons having supernatural powers for ill. The intellectuals of the Cassite period probably understood all the magic rites for exorcizing demons as divinely given means of protection with efficacy only for those in the gods' care. Under this system of thought an individual's fate was in his own hands. If he kept on the right side of the gods, no ill could assail him. This same idea provided an interpretation of history, of which no examples have yet been found from Old Babylonian times. The best example from the Cassite period is perhaps the *Weidner Chronicle*.¹ This text selects a number of important rulers from the earliest times onwards and explains their successes and failures as a reflection of their having provided, or having failed to provide, certain fish offerings for the Esagil temple in Babylon. The *Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta* and the records of Esarhaddon quoted above further document this philosophy. Many parts of the Old Testament presuppose the same interpretation of history, and as a doctrine it is not questioned in any known cuneiform text. The historical knowledge of the Cassite-period scholars was too inadequate for them to see the difficulties. The modern scholar finds an anachronism in the *Weidner Chronicle* before he can consider the premisses upon which it is based. The early kings did not take offerings to Esagil, because it did not then exist.

In the personal sphere the idea of piety as the guarantee of prosperity was more vulnerable. The suffering of an apparently righteous man was an irrefutable occurrence. Two long works of literature deal with this problem: *I will praise the lord of wisdom* (Bab. *ludlul bel nēmeqi*; abbreviated *Ludlul*), and the Babylonian *Theodicy* (see Chs. 2-3). The first is certainly Cassite period, the *Theodicy* may be a little later. They approach the problem from different angles. The writer of the first was a devotee of Marduk, and in his monologue the only real question is why Marduk allows his servant to suffer. The agents responsible for the suffering—the personal gods, the devils, the human persecutors—receive little attention, as though no responsibility rested with them. The *Theodicy*, on the other hand, pays much attention to the human oppressors, and is a document of social history.

A whole range of answers to the problems are given in texts either written or circulating in the Cassite period. The traditional idea was apparently not without its supporters, whatever the difficulties. The orthodox friend in the *Theodicy* never seems to tire of telling the unfortunate sufferer that piety brings prosperity. Unlike Job's friends he abstains from directly accusing his interlocutor of some abominable hidden crime (the two speakers maintain mutual respect to the end), though this must surely have occurred to him. In the end the *Theodicy* leaves the question unanswered. Logical support for the traditional view was often sought in a subtle elaboration of the doctrine of sin. The basis of this lay in the complaint going back to the Third Dynasty of Ur that the sufferer did not know for what

¹ Published by H. Güterbock, *ZA* 42. 47-57.

crime he was being punished. Also hymns since Sumerian times had emphasized the remoteness of the gods. Putting these two things together the Cassite-period theologians, or their predecessors, evolved the doctrine that man has no intuitive sense of sin, and only the gods could reveal it to him. Thus sins of ignorance were common, if not universal, and explain why a man without any consciousness of sin can nevertheless be guilty before the gods, and so suffer. The following passages illustrate the idea:

Mankind is deaf and knows nothing.

What knowledge has anyone at all?

He knows not whether he has done a good or a bad deed.¹

Where is the wise man who has not transgressed and [committed] an abomination?

Where is he who has checked himself and not ba[ckslided]?²

Who is there who has [checked] himself and not done an abomination?

People do not know their [. . .] which is not fit to be seen.

A god reveals what is fair and what is foul.

He who has his god—his sins are warded off.

He who has no god—his iniquities are many.³

So far as the writer of *Ludlul* attempts to answer the problems he has raised, he has a variation on this answer. He goes beyond the view that man can only learn right and wrong by divine revelation, and asserts that man can never distinguish good and bad because of the gods' remoteness. To him the logical explanation was that moral standards must be inverted with the gods as compared with men (II. 34-38). A similar outlook occurs in a prayer:

Mankind, as many as they be,

Of themselves, who knows (anything)?

Who has not transgressed? Which one has not offended?

Who knows the way of a god?⁴

The writer of *Ludlul* advances his theory without enthusiasm, and turns away in despair. No solution seemed adequate. By the end of the work an answer was achieved, though not in the direction which the writer had explored. In time the sufferings were ended and bliss followed. Strictly this is narrative, but it implies an answer: the sufferings of the righteous are only temporary. The Psalmist said the same of the prosperity of the wicked (Psalm 73).

To the writer of the *Theodicy* the problem was why some men oppress others. The sufferer rejects the idea that the personal god can provide protection. An idea on which

¹ IV R¹ 10, rev. 29-34 = OECT VI. 43.

² BA v. 640. 15-18 = OECT VI. 23.

³ a-a-ù it-×[×]× gil-la-tù la ub-lam
la i-da-nim-m[a ×]×-ši-na la na-aṭ-la
šá dam-gat ù [mas-]kàt ilu muš-kal-lim
šá i-šú-u il-šú [ku]š-šú-da hi-ta-tu-šú
šá il-šú la i-šú-u ma'-du ar-mu-šú

(BA v. 394, K 3186+3419. 39-43. The writer has collated the tablet and constructed of it and other pieces a long hymn to Marduk, which he is planning to publish as "Hymns to Marduk in Paragraphs, No. 1", where these are lines 106-10.)

⁴ E. Ebeling, *Handerhebung*, p. 72. 8-11.

both the sufferer and his friend agree is that the gods made men prone to lies and oppression. This is certainly the boldest and most original thought which came out of the Mesopotamian thinkers. Unfortunately it demolishes the presupposition of a universe ruled in justice by its divine creators. The work ends as soon as this agreement is reached, and we do not know if the writer grasped any of the tremendous implications of his thesis.

This apparently greater profundity of reasoning in the Cassite period was not without its counterpart in a sobering of the Old Babylonian *joie de vivre*. Political conditions may also have contributed. A country under foreign rulers and in a somewhat backward state does not promote hedonism. Thus in place of the advice given to Gilgameš quoted above the emphasis now lay on accepting the wretched state imposed by the gods, and continuing the various religious and social duties. Acquiescence and submission naturally followed this emphasis, and a number of texts which we date in the Cassite period preach this philosophy. The most curious example is an old legend of Narām-Sin, king and great military leader of the Agade Dynasty. It is ironical that a story about him should be made the basis for teaching pacifism. The legend,¹ which may not be without historical basis, tells how Narām-Sin was confronted with a coalition of barbarian hordes. Twice he failed to secure a good oracle, but nevertheless rashly joined battle. The result on each occasion was a complete disaster. The third time a good oracle was secured and victory followed. The writer now draws the irrelevant moral: when confronted by an enemy do not risk battle. Instead submit, accept terms, and appease the aggressor. On a personal level a similar resignation is advised. One section of the *Counsels of Wisdom* (p. 100) warns the hearer not to get embroiled in other people's lawsuits, and, should a case of one's own have arisen, the other party should be placated with love and kindness. In short, do not take up a challenge. In the *Theodicy* the sufferer declares his intention of giving up all social responsibilities and living the life of a vagrant (133-43). The *Dialogue of Pessimism*, if it is to be taken seriously, takes the final step, declaring all life to be futile, and suicide to be the only good.

These excesses of despair may not have been universal. The orthodox friend in the *Theodicy* chides the sufferer with blasphemy for his despondency. These institutions he proposed to abandon were no mere human arrangements, but sacred things provided by the gods for man's benefit. Thus to reject them was sin. A number of Sumerian texts state plainly that rulership and other parts of communal life were divine appointments. History begins, according to the *Sumerian King List*, with the lowering of kingship from heaven, and after the flood another lowering was necessary. The gifts that Inanna stole from Enki during his feast were social institutions which she wanted for her people. The opening section of the *Fable of the Tamarisk and the Palm* (p. 155) shows that this idea lasted into later times, and it certainly formed the theoretical basis of morality.

Perhaps the plainest statement of the orthodox good life is found in the *Counsels of a Pessimist* (p. 108). After freely granting that all is vanity, the writer urges his hearers not to neglect farm, family, or gods. The preceptive hymns (Ch. 5) fall into the same general

¹ Published by O. R. Gurney in *Anatolian Studies* v. 93-113.

category. The adultery, slander, oppression, and fraud against which they inveigh are plainly stated to be abominations to the gods. The *Counsels of Wisdom* (Ch. 4) is less uniform in content. The advice not to marry a prostitute or give too much respect to a slave girl (66–80) reads like advice of a practical rather than a moral character. Also the warning to a vizier not to abuse his position of trust (81–94) is based on the dangers of being found out, rather than on the gods' displeasure. Another section, however (135–47), teaches orthodox religious duties. This diversity of outlook is certainly the result of the composite nature of the work. Two other of its topics deserve mention. The one, improper speech, occurs twice (26–30; 127–34) and the large vocabulary of approximate synonyms used both here and elsewhere in Babylonian literature (see note on line 28) shows the importance attached to this offence. It is difficult to define its exact nature in modern terms, since it included both slander and blasphemy. Even in private such speech was sinful, as line 132 explains. It belongs clearly to the realm of magic, as the utterance is *per se* effective. Since, once uttered, it could not be taken back, warning against the fatal word is particularly insistent. The second topic, found in lines 56–65, is in sharp contrast with the previous one, yet equally widespread. It teaches kindness to those in need, and does so with the authority of Šamaš, the god of justice. The number of approximate synonyms for 'poor man' is again considerable.¹ The antiquity of this theme is shown by the attention given to the widow and orphan in Sumerian texts. A hymn to the goddess Nanše mentions them, and traditions of rulership and justice regard them as persons needing protection.² The earliest reference is in the inscriptions of the first social reformer, Urukagina of Lagaš (c. 2400 B.C.), himself a testimony to the social conscience of the Sumerians. In Babylonian literature this Sumerian tradition is followed.³ The *Theodicy* shows a keen awareness of social injustice, and the *Advice to a Prince* (p. 112) urges him to rule justly in order to secure his own safety from the gods.

¹ The ordinary Akkadian words for 'poor' are *lapnu* and *katū*, which occur together in both lists (*RA* 25. 125. 13–14) and hymns (K 3600 + DT 75 (*ABRT* 1. 54; H. Winckler, *Sammlung von Keilschrifttexten* 11. 3; *BA* v. 628) IV. 12). The less ordinary words are given in *Mal'ku-šarru* IV. 44–49:

<i>la i-šá-nu-u</i>	=	<i>muš-ke-nu</i>
<i>ma-ak-ka-nu-u</i>	=	<i>a-ku-ú</i>
<i>lu-la-nu-u</i>	=	<i>lil-lu</i>
<i>dun-na-mu-u</i>	=	<i>en-šu</i>
"	=	<i>ú-la-lu</i>
<i>a-ši-šu-u</i>	=	" (<i>LTBA</i> II. 1. XII. 75–80.)

The series *Erim.ḫu* also gives as a group *ú-la-lu*, *en-šu*, and *dun-na-mu-u* (IV. 167–9 = *CT* 18. 42 rev. 6–8), and the list *CT* 37. 25, III. 26–32, has a longer selection, with one addition: *lil-lu*, *še-e-šu*, *la-la-nu-u*, *muš-ke-nu*, and *dun-na-mu-[u]*. In literary texts combinations from this group are common, with occasional additions: *dunnamú*, *ekūtu*, *enšu*, and *lā išānū* (*LKA* 49 obv. 15–16 = E. Ebeling, *Handerhebung*, 50); *dunnamú*, *enšu*, *akū* (*K* 8663 obv. 1. 14–15; *OECT* VI. 73 obv. 11); *enšu*,

dunnamú (*PSBA* 17. 138. 2); *dunnamú*, *ulālu*, *enšu*, *hubbulu*, *muškēnu* (*Šamaš Hymn* 132–3); *lillu*, *akū* (*Fable of Willow*, K 8413. 5); *lā šūšuru*, *ekū*, *enšu*, *lā le'ū* (E. Ebeling, *Handerhebung*, p. 24. 20–21); *enšu*, *piznuqu*, *lā le'ū*, *ulālu*, *maqtu*, *dunnamú* (*ZA* 4. 38. III. 13–16). It is certainly striking how many of these literary synonyms for 'poor' are in origin expressions for physical weakness: *enšu* (see note on *Theodicy* 19), *akū* 'cripple', *lillu* 'physically weak' and 'mentally defective'. Because of the attention given to this class of people by the gods they came to be considered as "the poor of this world, rich in faith", so that Nabopolassar considers himself one of them: *a-na-ku en-šu-um pi-iz-mu-qu* (*VAB* IV. 68. 19).

² A rendering of the hymn to Nanše is given by Kramer in University Museum, *Bulletin*, Philadelphia, vol. 16/2. 32–34. Urukagina (Cone B XII. 23–25), Gudea (Cylinder B XVIII. 6–7, Statue B VII. 42–43), and Urnammu (*Or* N.S. 23. 43, 162–3) all speak of care for widow and fatherless, cf. *RA* 48. 148–9.

³ See the passages quoted on obv. 13–14 of the Ninurta hymn edited below, p. 317.

Šamaš was the god particularly concerned with justice and morality in Babylonian literature, and his worship must have been a salubrious element in an otherwise unprogressive religion. Apart from the *Šamaš Hymn* itself, it is noteworthy that the *Theodicy* concludes with his mention, and the *Counsels of Wisdom* connects him with humanitarianism. Throughout Babylonian history and literature his name keeps recurring, though he never achieved a place right at the top of the pantheon.¹ There is evidence that respect for him did reach to the masses. The popular sayings edited in Chapter 8 mention him several times, and the spread of similar material into the Ahiqar collections carried his name outside the area of strong Babylonian influence.

Thus the moral standards of the Babylonians were of very mixed origin. Some of the precepts continue primitive rites and taboos. Others are the outcome of cosmological thinking. Still others are a testimony to the force of the human conscience. The majority of scholars consider that the actual moral tone of Babylonian society, bedevilled by cult prostitution as it was, must have been very low indeed. Probably this was so in certain periods, though evidence is lacking and overall generalizations will certainly be wrong in part. Changes in ethical values must have taken place, and one example can be given. The pig was no offence to the Sumerians, but several of the popular sayings from the later period (p. 215) show a typical Semitic revulsion for it.

After the Cassite period the amount of new literature written was not very great, nor, with some exceptions, of much value. In thought the changes are so slight as to be almost unnoticeable. One tendency may be remarked which had already begun in the Old Babylonian period. Once the existence of a moral purpose in the universe had been established, a tendency to henotheism naturally followed. A single purpose could best be conceived as the responsibility of one god, rather than of the whole Mesopotamian pantheon. From time to time and in different places there were attempts to raise one god above the level of the rest: Marduk at more than one time in the history of Babylon, Ninurta in Middle Assyrian times, and Nābû a little later in Assyrian history. Some texts even go so far as to explain the other gods as aspects of the great god. A hymn says of Marduk:

Sin is your divinity, Anu your counsel,
Dagan is your lordship, Enlil your kingship,
Adad is your strength, Ea your subtle wisdom.²

Ninurta is similarly praised,³ and still farther in this direction Marduk is explained as being the other gods through having their qualities.⁴ This certainly gives the impression of a striving for monotheism, but Babylon and its culture were extinguished before any such goal was reached.

The Assyrians have hitherto received no more than a passing mention. In matters of

¹ An attempt to elevate Šamaš is found in a hymn which speaks of his activities as essential to the operations of the other gods (*Or N.S.* 23. 209-16).

² E. Ebeling, *Handerhebung*, 14. 3-5.

³ *KAR* 102; translated in A. Falkenstein and W. von Soden, *Sumerische und akkadische Hymnen und Gebete*, pp. 258-9.

⁴ *JTVI* 28. 1-22; *CT* 24. 50 and p. 9.

culture they were completely under the influence of the Babylonians. As early as Ashur-uballit I (c. 1350 B.C.) a Babylonian scribe was in the pay of an Assyrian king,¹ and Tukulti-Ninurta I (c. 1220 B.C.) used his sack of Babylon for seizing large numbers of cuneiform tablets as booty.² Kings before and after him doubtless shared his interest in Babylonian literature, and most of the native compositions were written in Standard Babylonian, not in the vernacular. At the end of the period of Assyrian supremacy Ashurbanipal was more successful in collecting tablets and amassing libraries than in arresting the break-up of the Assyrian power. We, at least, have cause to be glad, for it is from his tablet collections that the majority of the texts here edited have been recovered.

¹ *HUCA* 25. 127 = H. Fine, *Studies in Middle-Assyrian Chronology and Religion*, p. 109.

² *Afo* 18. 44. 3-8.